

Introduction

Though the limestone portals of the entrance to the Redpath Library are worn by a century of Montreal winters and have an unexpectedly venerable appearance, one can still clearly discern the word LIBRARY cut into the arch and the somewhat mysterious initials RLB, as well as the Latin motto which remains as apt today as when the Redpath Library first opened its doors, one hundred years ago: *Ne timeas recte faciendo*. The Redpath Library has not served as a library for many years now, serving instead the honourable role, under the jurisdiction of the Faculty of Music, of a ceremonial hall for the University at large. Even so, Redpath Hall remains in certain respects the very embodiment of McGill's libraries, as much for its graceful and dignified exterior, complete with tower and gargoyles (out of which the newer Redpath and McLennan Libraries extend to the south), as for its beautiful interior whose spaciousness and radiance evoke that attitude of respect for learning which has long characterized McGill. In its stately outward appearance and festive, almost indefinable atmosphere within, Redpath Hall seems to epitomize some essential spirit of McGill itself.

It is therefore appropriate that the sixth volume of *Fontanus* focus on Redpath Hall, the doors of which opened on October 31, 1893, almost exactly a century ago. In this centennial compilation, some six articles or notes deal with Redpath Hall, both the building itself as well as some of the exceptionally significant collections which as a library it housed and indeed, attracted. The building and the book collections, most notably the Redpath Tracts, were among the most generous gifts of Peter and Grace Redpath, two extraordinary benefactors to McGill University. It is of particular interest that Grace Redpath, until her death in 1907, actively continued building the Redpath Library's collections, and did so for many years following her husband Peter's sudden death only months after the opening festivities for the library which bore his name.

Fontanus VI includes among its articles a "celebratory anthology" of texts of historical interest on Redpath Hall, beginning with Sir William Dawson's *In Memoriam* for Peter Redpath. There are many interesting, moving and even amusing passages in these texts. The vivid descriptions of the Redpath Library in 1901 and thereafter by Sydney B. Mitchell are especially entertaining; Mitchell makes the place itself, and the people who filled it, come briefly alive again. And for a librarian, the report at half-century by then University Librarian Gerhard Lomer makes fascinating, if at moments melancholy, reading: so many essential problems remain with us!

Fontanus VI contains two important and fascinating essays on subjects not directly linked to Redpath Hall and its centennial - one essay on 17th-century England and another on Quebec in the 1940s - as well as a number of notes and comments of particular significance.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge, with thanks, the indefatigable efforts of Dr. Hans Möller, Research and Development Librarian and Editor of *Fontanus*. Under his editorship, *Fontanus* has grown into an outstanding Canadian scholarly journal which is read with admiration both here and abroad. Special thanks are due as well to Dr. Richard Virr, Curator of Manuscripts in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, for his expert editorial assistance.

As Director of Libraries, I am especially proud to have the honour of introducing this edition of *Fontanus* and thus to see some lasting connection forged between our predecessors - benefactors, administrators, faculty, librarians and students of a century ago, - ourselves today, and those still to come after us.

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